



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

May 27, 2005

Mr. William Farr
Federal Highway Administration
Louisiana Division Office
5304 Flanders Drive, Suite A
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Dear Mr. Farr:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for Implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed its review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for I-69 Section of Independent Utility (SIU) No.14 Junction I-20 near Haughton, Louisiana to US 82 near El Dorado, Arkansas. This section of I-69 is one of several sections of the national I-69 corridor. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department is proposing to construct approximately 62 miles of four-lane divided Interstate Highway between Shreveport, Louisiana and El Dorado, Arkansas. The Federal Highway Administration is the Federal sponsor for this project and responsible for compliance with NEPA and the CEQ implementing regulations.

The DEIS provides the public and Federal, state, and local agencies with the assurance that the project sponsors have evaluated, addressed, and documented project-related social, economic, and environmental concerns. The DEIS evaluates and identifies the potential environmental impacts associated with the Build Alternatives, including the No-Action. Provided unavoidable impacts are minimized and mitigated with appropriate compensatory mitigation, the DEIS demonstrates the final selected alternative action should have minimal significant adverse impact. Final selection will be based on practicability and viability which includes not only environmental but also economic costs and social impact. EPA has identified Alternative 5 or Alternative 5 option 2 as the preferred alignment and recommends its selection as the environmentally preferred alternative. These alternatives appear to have the least potential impact and adverse impact to wetlands. Alternative 4 has a greater potential direct impact to streams with more crossings on intermittent and perennial streams. Alternative 4, option 3, had springs identified which provided for special habitat not found elsewhere. These areas should be avoided.

EPA agreed to be a cooperating agency in the development of the DEIS. A cooperating agency is an organization, other than the lead agency, which has jurisdiction by law or with special expertise with respect to environmental impacts due to a major Federal action that would affect the quality of the human environment. The EPA has special expertise in the areas of

NEPA, Clean Air Act conformity, and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the disposal of dredged or fill material. EPA's participation as a cooperating agency provided our agency the coordination opportunities and capacity to comment early in the developmental stages of the DEIS and thus contributed to the development of environmentally acceptable alternatives and a full disclosure EIS.

EPA rates the DEIS as "**LO**," i.e., EPA has "**Lack of Objection**" to the implementation of the I-69 SIU No.14." EPA has identified Alternative 5 or Alternative 5, option 2, as the environmentally preferred alignment and recommends its selection as the preferred alternative.

Our classification will be published in the Federal Register according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act to inform the public of our views on proposed Federal actions. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Jansky of my staff at (214) 665-7451 or by e-mail at jansky.michael@epa.gov for assistance.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the DEIS. Please send our office five copies of the FEIS when it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, EPA (Mail Code 2252A), Ariel Rios Federal Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Rhonda M. Smith, Acting Chief
Office of Planning and
Coordination (6EN-XP)